CENTRE OF LEARNING: Kota Samarahan is already known as the academic hub with two major universities Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) and Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Sarawak as well as Institut Latihan Perindustrian (ILP) and teacher-training centre Institut Pendidikan Guru Malaysia (IPG) Tun Abdul Razak.

From rural outskirts to urban centre

By **Churchill Edward**

WITH depleting land for middle class housing areas in Kuching, academic hub Kota Samarahan is fast becoming the preferred residential area for Kuching and Samarahan folk *who are looking for affordable housing a stone's throw away from Kuching.*

This can be seen by the mushrooming of residential estate projects and mega shopping mall projects such as Bandar Riyal and The Summer to attract house buyers.

Kampung Entinggan Tuai Rumah David Jiku Nader said: "Kota Samarahan is set to become a residential hub as suitable land for housing estates in Kuching is getting less or scarce. I have come across many middle income earners hunting for houses in Kota Samarahan and most of them said the houses here are cheaper than those in Kuching city.

"With the emergence of shopping malls such as Bandar Riyal and The Summer, no one can deny that many business people like the operators of these malls and support services could foresee that the population here is forever increasing," he pointed out.

Other smaller malls have already been set up in anticipation of the ever-increasing population along with mixed residential and commercial properties concentrated along the old Jalan Muara Tuang (now Jalan Dato Mohd Musa) and the outer ring expressway.

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Other major landmarks that mark this constituency as the second most important administrative centre after Kuching are the Sarawak Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority (SALCRA) and Institut Latihan Tadbiran Negara (INTAN) Sarawak complexes.

The setting up of the Sarawak General Hospital Heart Centre in this constituency also shows some potential for it to become a health hub in the near future.

"However as we foresee rapid population growth due to affordable housing estate development, the constituency should have more support services, public amenities, shops and especially kindergartens and schools as well as places of worship in the years to come," said the community leader.

He said because of such foreseeable developments, there are ample business opportunities for small contractors to support Class A contractors.

Arable land in the outskirts of Kota Samarahan can make the constituency a major food belt for the southern region.

Advances in modern agriculture have been made at the Paya Paloh Agriculture Research Station in Tanjung Tuang, said to be a model of modern paddy farming land as an effort to explore cost-effective means in the planting of rice.

Remote places in the Samarahan Division will be linked by roads to other places in Sarawak with the building of Batang Samarahan bridge at Kampung Baru and Batang Sadong bridge at Sungai Buloh, which will definitely be catalysts to rapid development in the division.

Penghulu Ali Odek of Kampung Tanjung Parang said: "We are of course proud and happy over the rapid development in Kota Samarahan in particular with the emergence of several shopping malls and residential estates."

Ali also described Kota Samarahan as a developed township with the development of several government buildings and human capital development.

Penghulu Ain Mahli of Kampung Moyan Laut also said the development in Kota Samarahan has spilled over to nearby Asajaya District.

Asajaya used to be a small village but now it has roads, a health clinic, secondary school and bazaar as well as 24-hour daily electricity and clean water supplies, he said.

"We are grateful for the development in Asajaya and we believe further progress will be experienced by us villagers," he added.

Ain, a farmer, said he hoped the government would include a bank and a fire station in their next phase of development there.

He believed that if Kota Samarahan saw further development, the spillover effect of greater development in neighbouring Asajaya would be realised.

An elderly resident Jais Deli, 81, from Kampung Asajaya Hulu, also expressed his gratitude and happiness over the development in Kota Samarahan.

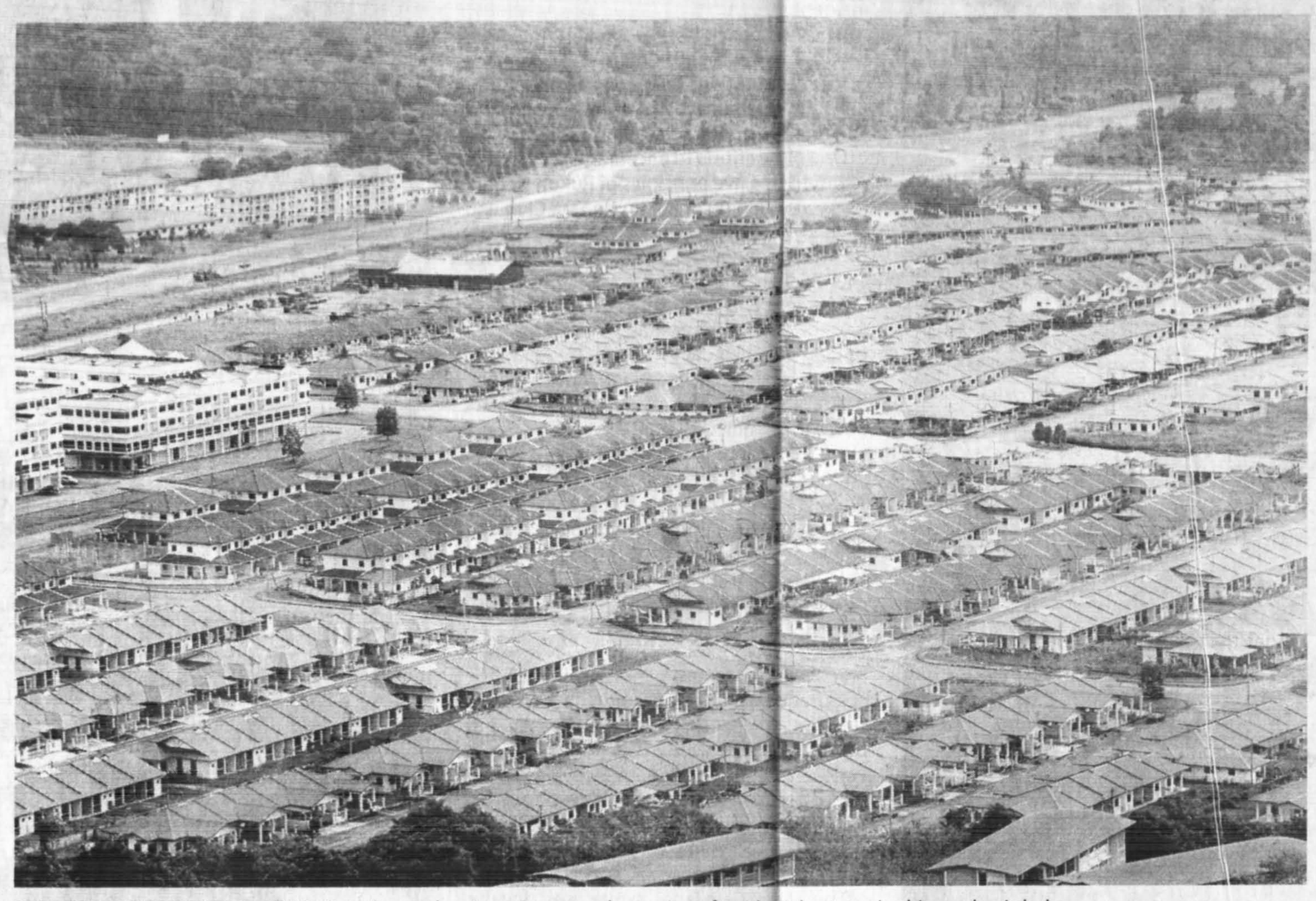
He attributed the success of the constituency to the struggles and sacrifices of past and present community leaders including the elected representatives.

Another resident Pon Silat, 77, said he hoped Kota Samarahan will progress further as the nation aimed to attain developed status.

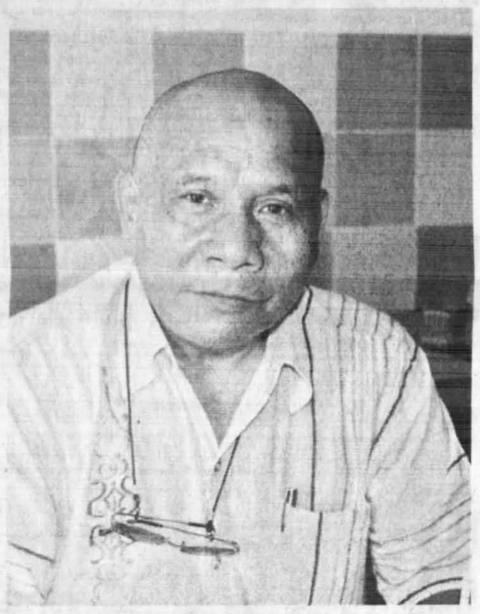
The residents of Asajaya have also experienced great change as living standards have improved for rural villagers there.

Pon, a farmer of Kampung Asajaya Hulu, said Samarahan can be said to have progressed beyond the expectations of the villagers.

Fisherman Bodi Amit, 61, (Asajaya) also expressed his happiness and said he was impressed with the government of the day's efforts to improve the economy, education and health of the people in Samarahan.



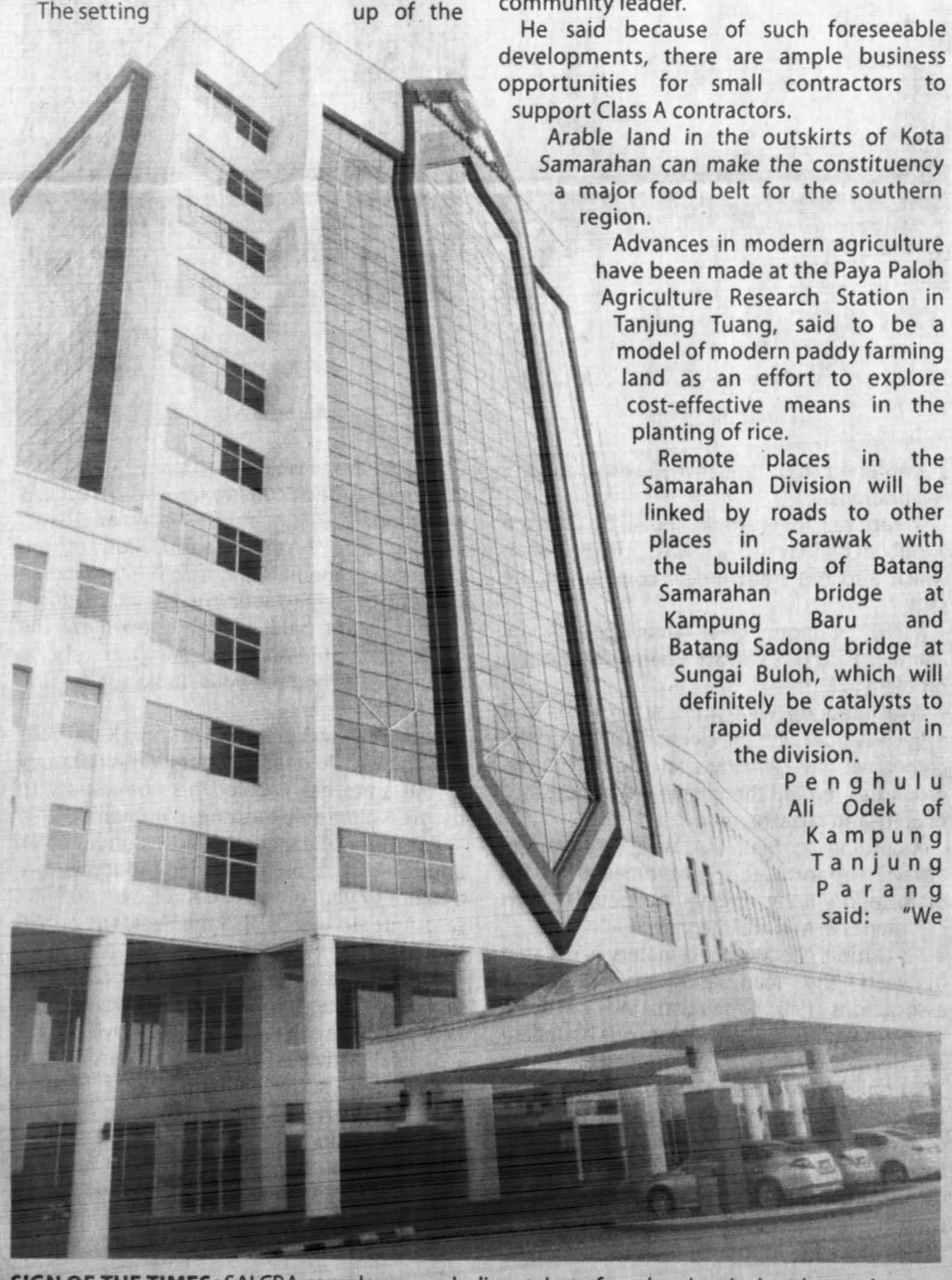
PREFERRED RESIDENTIAL AREA: Kota Samarahan is seeing a mushrooming of residential estates in this academic hub.



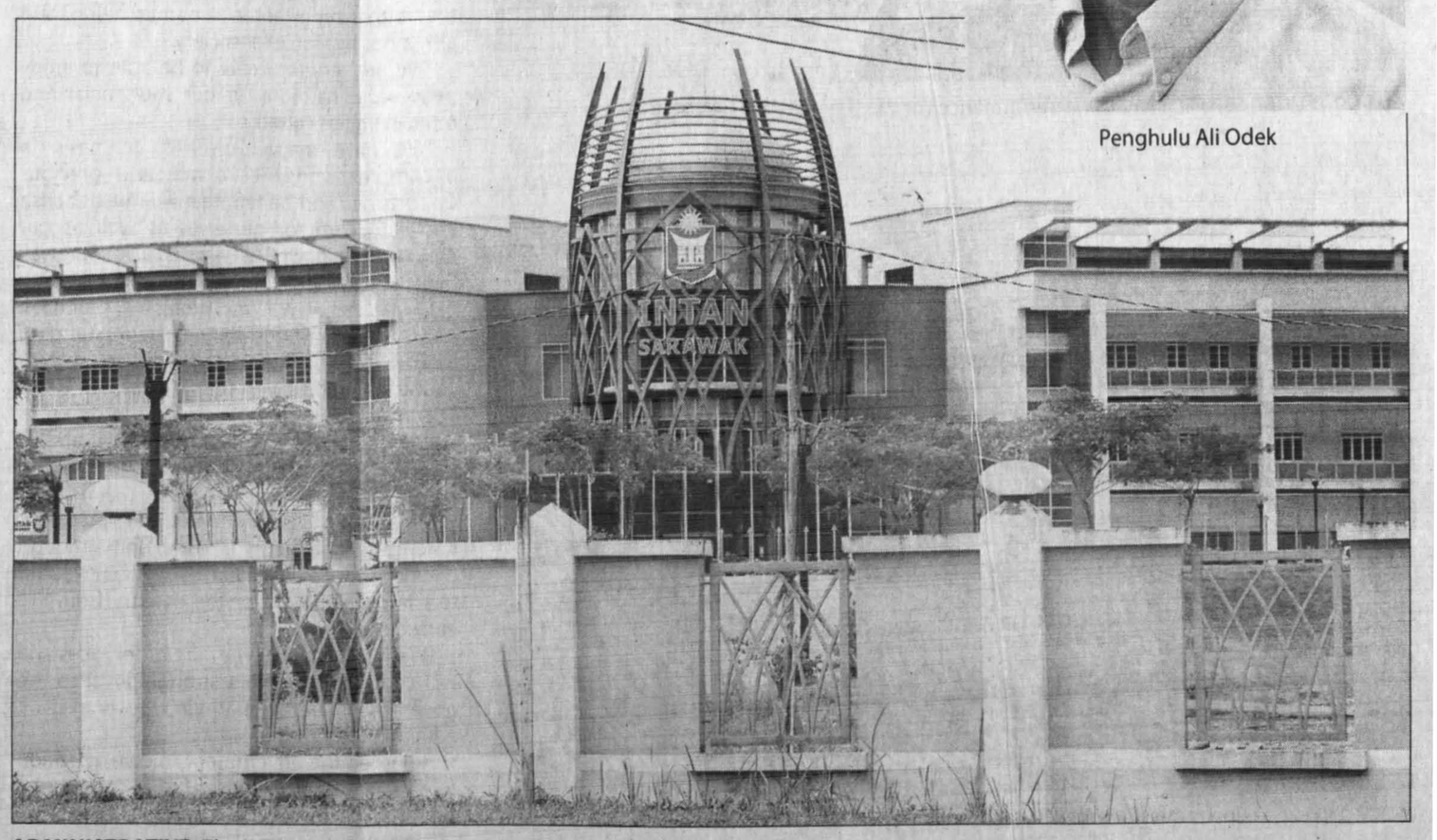
Tuai Rumah David Jiku Nader

Penghulu Ain Mahli

Penghulu Ali Odek



SIGN OF THE TIMES: SALCRA complex, a symbolic catalyst of rural and agricultural growth.



ADMINISTRATIVE: The INTAN complex - landmark symbol of public administration.